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U.S. STRIKES TARGETS IN IRAQ AND SYRIA TO AVENGE DEATH OF TROOPS

LONG-RANGE BOMBERS DEPLOYED

US President Joe Biden said its response would not be just one hit, but will continue at times and places of its choosing. The US employed more than 125 precision munitions. The attacks began after the bodies of soldiers, who were killed in a drone attack on January 28 in Jordan, returned to the US | P13

85 targets in Iraq, Syria were struck by the U.S. military in its attack

- An Iranian militia spokesperson said it does not want to escalate the tensions
- Iraqi government said 16 were killed, including civilians, near Syrian border because of the attack. Syria did not give the casualty figures

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BHARAT RATNA FOR LK ADVANI

BJP stalwart challenged dynastic politics, fought to get democracy out of one party's grasp, says Prime Minister

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ New Delhi/Sambalpur

LESS than two weeks after the consecration of the Ram Lalla idol in Ayodhya, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday announced the conferring of the country's highest civilian honour, the Bharat Ratna, on BJP stalwart Lal Krishna Advani.

Now 96, Advani was central to the Ram Janmabhoomi movement as his Somnath to Ayodhya rath yatra in 1990 amplified the temple pitch and enhanced the BJP's electoral appeal. He later rose to become the deputy prime minister in the NDA government headed by Atal Bihari Vajpayee. Announcing the government's decision, Modi said the honour to the stalwart is in recognition of his invaluable contribution in the service of the nation.

Accepting it, an apparently emotional Advani described it as an honour to the ideals and principles with which he worked throughout his life for nation.

Addressing a public meeting in Sambalpur, Modi said this honour is for all those who believe in the ideology of 'nation first'. "Advani continuously fought to get democracy out of one party's grasp and guided everyone. He challenged dynasty politics and connected India's democracy to all-inclusive and nationalist ideologies," he said.

Advani thanked both President Droupadi Murmu and Modi. "With utmost humility and gratitude, I accept the Bharat Ratna that has been conferred on me today... Ever since I joined the RSS as its volunteer at the age of 14, I have sought reward in only thing — in dedicated and selfless service of my beloved country in whatever task life assigned to me. What inspired my life is the motto, *Idam na Mam* — This life is not mine. My life is for my Nation." He is the seventh eminent personality to be conferred the Ratna in the last 10 years. P13

File photo of Narendra Modi with L K Advani

'Siddaganga seer must be awarded too'

Welcoming the Centre's decision to bestow the 'Bharat Ratna', on veteran BJP leader LK Advani, several leaders of Congress, including CM Siddaramaiah, on Saturday requested that the award also be presented to Siddaganga Mutt seer Sri Shivakumara Swamiji posthumously. FULL REPORT: P4

Ramalinga seeks funds to renovate 100 Ram temples

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

The ruling Congress seems to be adopting "soft Hindutva" to tackle BJP ahead of Lok Sabha elections, and the pivotal role is being played by senior minister Ramalinga Reddy.

Reddy, who is the muzrai minister, has suggested to Chief Minister Siddaramaiah to allocate funds to renovate 100 Lord Rama temples across the state. Last month, Reddy, not to alienate the Hindu vote bank, had issued an order to all muzrai temples in the state to perform pujas on January 22 to mark the consecration of Ram Lalla at Ayodhya. Reddy proposed the temple renovation plan during the pre-budget meeting of the department with Siddaramaiah, who is also the finance minister. "Regardless of the quantum of allocation in the budget, we will rejuvenate Ram temples as we have our own funds in the department," he clarified. P7

Buzz on RS ticket to Sonia, Raghuram

PREETHA NAIR @ New Delhi

WITH the deadline for filing nomination papers for the Rajya Sabha elections approaching, speculation is rife on former Congress chief Sonia Gandhi and former RBI Governor Raghuram Rajan entering the fray.

Congress sources hinted that Sonia may take the Upper House route to continue in Parliament. There is no clarity on whether she will contest from Raebareli in UP, the constituency she currently represents.

The RS elections for 56 seats across 15 states will be held on February 27 and nominations have to be filed by February 15. The Congress units in Rajasthan, Himachal, and Telangana have offered seats to Sonia.

In Maharashtra, the Congress and Maharashtra Vikas Aghadi may field Raghuram Rajan as its candidate from the state. Early this week, Rajan met Shiv Sena (UBT) president Uddhav Thackeray at his residence, sparking speculation.

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Kuruba seer says denied entry into temple sanctum

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Shivamogga

KURUBA community's Kanaka Guru Peetha seer **Eshwaranandapuri Swami** on Saturday made a serious allegation that he was not allowed inside the sanctum sanctorum of Chennakeshava temple at Bagur village in Hosadurga taluk, Chitradurga. He also claimed that the temple was cleansed after he left the premises. The temple priest, however, denied the allegations. CM Siddaramaiah, who too belongs to the Kuruba community, said he is unaware of the development.

Speaking at the Chitradurga and Chikkamagaluru inter-district Kannada Sahitya Sammelana, organised by the Kannada Sahitya Parishat, at Sanehalli on Friday, the seer said swamijis too face discrimination. P7

BUMRAH CARNAGE

Jasprit Bumrah produced a reverse swing masterclass for the ages, taking a six-fer to put India in command on Day 2 | AFP

EXPRESS READ

ED plaint against Delhi CM over summons

New Delhi: The ED on Saturday filed a complaint against Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal in court for not appearing in a money laundering case linked to the alleged excise policy scam | P12

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